



Tennessee Regulatory Authority

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No Change to BellSouth's Directory Assistance Exemptions

Nashville – Consumers who are exempt from the .29 cent usage fee assessed by BellSouth for using directory assistance services are still exempt, says Eddie Roberson, Chief of the TRA's Consumer Services Division.

All BellSouth customers who are exempt from the fee were sent a notification letter recently by the company reaffirming the conditions required for obtaining the exemption. Omitted from the letter, however, was the exemption to persons 65 years of age or older, who the TRA ruled in 1999 should also qualify.

This omission from the BellSouth letter resulted in numerous calls to the TRA from consumers concerned that they were no longer eligible for the fee exemption.

The current exemptions allow for all consumers to have six (6) free directory assistance calls before incurring a .29 cent per-inquiry, usage charge. The .29 cent fee is also waived for individuals with visual or physical impairments as well as for individuals 65 years of age or older. The exemption further applies to BellSouth customers with residing persons 65 years of age or older.

TRA officials, in response to BellSouth's notification letter, say the exemptions have not changed and that all persons who are eligible receive the exemption, pursuant to the TRA's ruling, still qualify.

"Obviously, the omission of the 65 year age exemption was an oversight on BellSouth's part. We fully expect them to clarify the matter to their customers in a follow up letter," added Roberson.

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The Tennessee Regulatory Authority (TRA) provides regulatory oversight to Tennessee's investor-owned public utilities. Our jurisdiction includes approximately 1200 utility providers including the intrastate transmission of natural gas. For more information about the TRA, please visit our web site at www.state.tn.us/tra.

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